

May 22, 2013

Preparing for Hurricane Season

What advice can the Embassy offer to U.S. citizens in Jamaica for the hurricane season?

Plan ahead, and take responsibility for your own safety before an emergency arises. The U.S. and Jamaican governments offer a number of resources to the public to help you do this.

The U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency offers detailed suggestions on how to prepare for emergencies of all kinds, including hurricanes, at www.ready.gov. There you can find instructions on how to prepare an emergency kit with stockpiled food, water, and medical supplies, and how to set up an emergency communication plan with your family and friends.

Monitor the weather. Storm forecasts can be found on the National Hurricane Center's website at www.nhc.noaa.gov. Jamaica's Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management provides information on local conditions at www.odpem.org.jm. If you don't have ready access to a computer, pay attention to local media reports throughout hurricane season.

Register with the U.S. Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) – even if you reside in Jamaica long-term. The Embassy uses STEP to transmit emergency messages to U.S. citizens in Jamaica. If you aren't registered, you might miss important information. You can register with STEP at [www.travel](http://www.travel.state.gov).state.gov or through U.S. Citizen Services section of the Embassy website.

Make sure your passports and visas are current. The Embassy might not be able to issue passports and visas in the wake of a catastrophic storm. If it becomes clear that a storm is heading for Jamaica, the best way to avoid danger is to depart the island before it strikes, and stay away until it is safe to return. To do this, you will need a valid passport or visa. U.S. citizens should ensure that their passports are valid through the end of hurricane season. If your passport expires soon, renew it now. If you are Jamaican and your children are U.S. citizens, you will only be able to travel with them if you have a valid visa. Make sure your visa is current. Make an evacuation plan now, and be sure that you have the necessary documents to allow you to leave on short notice.

If a situation requires an evacuation from an overseas location, the Department of State will work with commercial airlines to ensure that U.S. citizens are repatriated as safely and efficiently as possible. Commercial airlines are the Department's primary source of transportation in an evacuation; other means of transport are utilized only as a last resort. The Department of State does not provide no-cost transportation, however, nor is space for non-U.S. citizen relatives guaranteed. For all of these reasons, it is best to depart before a storm makes landfall, when commercial transportation is still available. More information on evacuation assistance can be found at the U.S. Department of State's website, www.travel.state.gov.

*For more information about American Citizen Services, please visit our website,
<http://kingston.usembassy.gov/service.html>.*

For safety and security measures, the U.S. Embassy asks that all individuals arrive at the Embassy or Consular Agency no more than 15 minutes before their designated appointment time.